The Floods of Faltermeyer

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ACT I

SCENE I. FALTERMEYER CASTLE - THRONE ROOM - DAWN

The rain falls outside and it sounds like a war drum. No lights illuminate the inside of the castle, but we see silhouettes of servants moving, going about their diligent tasks.

One silhouette stands still, by a window. A man of royal blood, HANS. A young teenager (EDWARD) walks to him and stands by.

EDWARD
No, my lord uncle, please.
Thou mustn't.
The roads are perilous,
the waters rise, and
death doth linger in their wake.

HANS
If 'tis the course that will save our people, then it must be.
If not I, who then shall bear this burden?

A pause. The boy steps closer.

EDWARD
Fear grips me now, uncle.
I do not wish for thy death.
Thy return was not but a fortnight previous!

HANS
Do not fret, dear boy.
Though thou art not born of my loins, I cherish thee just the same.
I will bear thy worries as I bear
the hopes of all who dwell here.

Hans turns to Edward and rests his hand on his shoulder.

HANS
The journey will not be perilous. 'Tis only a week's journey at most. I will return, and when I do, I expect a feast to celebrate me and the supplies I bring.

Hans laughs. He slaps Edward on his back. Edward's expression doesn't change.

EDWARD
The Faltermeyer family is frail without its figurehead. Hast thou thought twice, or thrice, upon this course?

Hans flicks his cloak in frustration.

HANS
Thou art but a child! You know not of what you speak.
The head of the house still resides within these halls.
(MORE)

HANS (cont'd)
Even in his death, an heir there is, chosen by the blood coursing through thy veins.
Hold thy tongue, rest thy heart, and still thy fear!

Edward bites his lip, silenced by Hans's words. Hans glances at him, regret flickering across his face, but says nothing. He turns and strides out of the room, his cloak billowing like the shadow of a storm.

Edward remains by the window, watching the rain streak down the glass like tears.

SCENE II. OPHELIE'S CHAMBER

Candles light the maid's chambers. We see jewelry and exotic clothes strewn throughout the room, a strange sight for the occupant's occupation.

The Duke's sword, with the insignia of the Faltermeyer clan, lays there as well.

A moan.

We see a man (AUGUST) and woman (OPHELIE) in the bed, sheets covering them. August stands, satisfied.

AUGUST
Oh my dear Ophelie, if not for thee, I'd sooner leave this hellish castle for any other such horizon.

OPHELIE
And I'd sooner leave with thee.

AUGUST
Somewhere, not far from this dreadful castle, off the western coast, is a beach.
A beautiful beach with sand so soft and waters so blue, thou would think thou in heaven.

August faces Ophelie and looks into her eyes.

AUGUST
I would like to take thee there. We could stay. In the beach, in the water, forever.

OPHELIE
The wrong type of water occupies thy mind. Think of the rains and floods, not thy dreams and oceans.

She begins getting dressed.

AUGUST
So quick to leave, then?

OPHELIE
Thy duties call, do they not?
A Duke must see to his Duchy.

AUGUST
No, no, the rains still reign over us.
Their waters seep into everything.
Nothing can be done, and so nothing is required of me.
My only duties are to thee, my love.

OPHELIE
And what of thy wife? Thy spouse who waits with bated breath up in her royal bed?

August pauses.

AUGUST
She will be there, just as the land will be there. But as long as I draw breath in this mortal vessel I call a body, thou will not be short of my affections. I hunger for you, always.

August grabs her. Ophelie glares at him.

AUGUST
Thine eyes are filled with passion. With rage or with love, I cannot tell.
Only my lips will be able to sort this matter.

They kiss. August passionately pushes his lips onto hers. She relents and moans.

CREAK.

The illicit couple immediately turns towards the chamber doors.

August sprints over to the doors and looks into the halls, but they are still dark, as no candles or torches have been lit.

Whatever or whoever moved the door... is GONE.

OPHELIE
Nay...

AUGUST
Nay, indeed.

August closes the door shut.

AUGUST
A fool I am.

OPHELIE
O, and a whore I must be.

AUGUST
If a whore is thy profession, then I am nothing but a pauper.
Do not fret, my paramour. I will find this scoundrel and I will end his feeble life.

SCENE III. A HALLWAY, JUST A CORNER FROM OPHELIE'S CHAMBERS

An older woman (MARGERETE) stands in the darkness, wearing a cloak with her hood up. She tries to control her breathing, attempting to successfully HIDE from August.

MARGERETE
O I swear...
I will have my vengeance upon thee. Thou must know thine errors,
the crime upon our vows of matrimony. Much would have been acceptable,
but this, a tryst with a lowly miss, will not be tolerated.
This wrong must be abated.
My thirst for blood has to be sated.
Must God deliver me to the ninth ring with a husband such as this?
A cruel devil, one who calls my love false as my womb betrays him?
Many a night I have cried for thine affection, changed my body, cut my hair.
All these tasks for naught.
So be it.
If heaven will not have me,
the hells can claim me as their own. My breath will be sulfur, my loins will be barbed.
Even as I live, a Duke's crone,
my heart must be reforged from a beating one of flesh to one of stone.

SCENE IV. THE THRONE ROOM - NOON

The torches and candles are lit in Castle Faltermeyer. Duke August sits in his throne, rubbing his temples as an endless line of drenched subjects approach him. To his left, Edward, his SON, as well as MARGERETE, his wife. To his right, OPHELIE.

The hall is loud, filled with the murmurs of wet and weary peasants.

Margerete's expression remains stoic. Edward's face betrays his fear.

The royal advisor, FREDMOND, clears his throat and steps forward towards AUGUST.

FREDMOND
My Duke.

AUGUST
These peasants wear upon me, Fredmond. Their woes, their pleas, their ceaseless prattle—
(MORE)

AUGUST(cont'd)
’Tis a burden upon my patience. Have they no mind? A Duke doth not control the rains from the heavens. What can be done of their flooded crops? They've swum out to the ocean!

FREDMOND
My lord, thou may’st wish to heed this next man’s tale.

AUGUST
Very well.

A peasant, AMLIN, steps forward. The murmuring crowd goes silent. Amlin's eyes are pale white.

AMLIN
My Duke.

AUGUST
Hm. Thy name?

AMLIN
Amlin, my Duke.

AUGUST
What dost thou seek from thy Duke?

AMLIN
Payment.

August leans forward, almost leaving his chair. He looks at Fredmond, then Ophelie, then back to Amlin.

August turns to Fredmond, still laughing.

AUGUST
Fredmond, I must applaud thee. Thou hast brought me a jester in beggar's garb, perchance?

FREDMOND
A-

AMLIN
I am no fool.
I hail from a land far beyond these hills,
A place where Dukes go in order to spin the threads of fate in their favor, so long as they pay the price.
My head, her name is Viola.

AUGUST
Viola?

AMLIN
Aye, the Witch Viola, famed far and wide. The very same who lent thee aid, my lord, when thou sought to rise and claim this duchy.

Margerete's face crunches in confusion.

MARGERETE
What nonsense dost thou prattle? My husband owes naught to a charlatan! The Duke ne'er hath a need for a crone, with her useless bones.

Amlin turns and faces Margerete.

AMLIN
Thy lover journeyed long and far,
Until he stood before Viola’s tower.
He begged for power, for a mighty duchy.
And she granted it—but not without a price.

MARGERETE
Impossible.

AMLIN
As such a great task was done,
now such a great price must be exacted.
A life for life most wondrous.
Thy firstborn, my lord.

AUGUST
Preposterous! No such bargain was struck.
I 'member the day whence the title was bestowed upon me.
My brother and I, bearing the head of our King's rival
entered his Majesty's great castle, I expecting no reward.
My brother, the pragmatist, awaited advancement.
'Twas a surprise - the hand that held the head became Duke.
The hand that did not, became Baron.
With this memory I recall and perpend,
I declare thee an ill fool.
Thy words are but wind, and thy presence an affront!
Leave now, wretch, ere I set my hounds upon thee.

AMLIN
But my lord, the debt is real.
Thy rise, thy fortune, all hang on this accord.
The favor thou didst promise must be paid.
And now I come to claim what is owed.

August gets out of his chair and points to Amlin.

AUGUST
Seize him!

The armed guards pull Amlin up and towards the dungeons.

AMLIN
The bill is due and red it runs.
Thy duchy shall wither beneath the weight of debt,
As waters rise and ruin claims thy lands.
(MORE)

AMLIN(cont'd)
Until thou payest, ruin shall be thy lot.

Amlin pulls away from the guards with seemingly superhuman strength.

AMLIN
I will wait but a day in thy dungeon’s depths.
Beyond that, my lord, the debt shall grow,
And with it, thy sorrow. Mark my words,
The ledger of fate accrues its interest.

Amlin disappears, pulled into the darkness by the guards.

ACT II

SCENE I. THE ROYAL BEDROOM - NIGHT

Margerete sits at her study, reading a book.

The door gently opens. August enters.

MARGERETE
Finally, my husband makes his way into my bedchambers.
After all this time, what have I done to deserve this blessing?

AUGUST
Still thy tongue, Marge. Thou art my wife.

MARGERETE
Thy mood is foul, indeed. Thy faculties must have failed thee.
Dost thou believe the wretched beggar on our steps?

Margaret cackles.

August frowns.

AUGUST
Though laughter hath oft been my solace and a jester my delight, now it seems no joy can find its way to my heart. A man who comes far and wide to venture here, into my hall, and speak to me the way he did...

MARGERETE
Truth, then?

AUGUST
I had hoped my spouse be honest, and lend me her counsel. I seek it in all humility.

MARGERETE
Couch your worries 'til the morrow. My head aches, and I cannot counsel thee until I've had my rest.
Look upon my hair, see the taxation of rule upon my body.

AUGUST
Why must thou worry and dwell on thy looks? My fair lady has never looked fairer. I bid thee farewell.

August leaves.

MARGERETE
Thy words ring false, my beloved.
I remember the last time that thy laid with me. My hair still looked dark as ebony. With these speckles of gray in my hair, no wonder it is the company of a young whore thou would prefer.
Ay, a fool I am. But outmatched by my Duke, a fool who doth seek the counsel of a spurned wife.
What devils work in tandem to torture me so?
Though I feign sickness, tonight will be the hour that thy gray-haired lady crone will strike.

SCENE II. CLASSROOM - LATER

EDWARD
Father?

AUGUST
O, Edward, my dear son.

EDWARD
Father, what cruelties ail thee?

AUGUST
Nothing for thy worries. 'Tis a Duke's responsibility to be the father for all of his people.

Edward fiddles with his ducal sword. Responsibility lays heavy on his head.

EDWARD
Those with great power must match with commensurate humility and responsibility.

AUGUST
Ah, what truth spills from thy mouth. A beautiful and quick-witted son I have. What have I done to deserve thee?

EDWARD
Thy words humble me, father. Was flattery the only reason to interrupt my lessons?

AUGUST
Choice, my son. Judgment and execution, decisions, decisions.
O, how heavy my heart is when it maketh the ends of many men.

(MORE)

AUGUST(cont'd)
To be a Duke is to be death itself, the sole reaper that must drive souls to Hades.
Should such a man as I have this power? To giveth and taketh away, like the almighty Gods o'er the bounds of our skies?
Nay. My flesh is too weak; 'tis only human.
My son, my son, swear to ne'er take these foolish responsibilities as thine own.

EDWARD
'Tis impossible, father.
I am your first-born son.
The title and responsibilities of thee will fall to me upon your death.

AUGUST
Everything is thy choice, is it not? Thy life belongs to thee and thee alone.
Do not follow merely because 'tis the norm.

August looks at his sword.

AUGUST
This sword need not be thy last possession, like 'twill be mine.
O, my son, I tire of all of this. Perhaps it is time to retire. To take my leave and rest. 'Tis what I deserve, no?

EDWARD
Yet the rains reign.

AUGUST
Ay. The rains fall. Let us pray they do not fall upon thee.

August kisses Edward's forehead and leaves.

SCENE III. MAID'S CHAMBERS - NIGHT

Enter August. Ophelie sits on her bed.

OPHELIE
I have missed thee.

AUGUST
Be still, my heart. There isn't much time. The man in the dungeon awaits me. If 'tis my last act, so be it. The floods must stop.

OPHELIE
Dost thy son know of thy intentions?

AUGUST
I will not sacrifice my son upon the altar of this wicked witch. There will be nothing of the sort as long as my heart still beats. Mark my words, Ophelie. I will found a way.

OPHELIE
Intend to enter the dungeon, then?

AUGUST
If it will save my son, then any course of action will be taken. I must go.

Pause.

AUGUST
Never let it slip from thy mind the love I bear for thee.

SCENE IV. AUGUST'S CHAMBERS - ONLY A FEW HOURS BEFORE DAWN

Margerete sneaks into August's chambers and holds a sheathed dagger.

MARGERETE
'Tis the hour of my vengeance.
My rage in an instrument of death. This dagger in my hands will pierce the veil of life and send my husband to the hells where he belongs.

Margerete unsheathes her dagger and goes over to his bed.

She raises the dagger up, but before she brings it down, she HALTS.

August's bed is empty.

MARGERETE
My whore of a husband humiliates me yet again, delaying his death whilst indulging in his base appetites. Soon, then.
Soon, this blade shall taste his blood.

Margerete exits.

SCENE V. THE THRONE ROOM - NEXT MORNING

Edward stands by the throne, as do Margerete and Ophelie. August has not appeared.

EDWARD
Ophelie, where is father?

OPHELIE
I do not know.

MARGERETE
(whisper)
Surprising, thou dost not know my husband’s whereabouts.

OPHELIE
Duchess?

MARGERETE
Dost thou have no idea?

OPHELIE
I will look for at him at once, my lady.

MARGERETE
(whispers)
Let us hope only thine eyes search for my spouse.

Ophelie exits. After a few moments...

Ophelie re-enters, carrying the ducal sword.

OPHELIE
He's dead.

EDWARD
Father?

OPHELIE
Yes.

MARGERETE
What of the messenger? The fool, Amlin?

OPHELIE
Dead as well.

Margerete turns away.

EDWARD
How is this possible?

OPHELIE
Thy father drowned, my lord. His body bloated, his flesh consumed by water.
Not only this, but a great tree.

EDWARD
A tree?

OPHELIE
A great tree hath sprouted from the Duke's belly. The rotten roots have ripped into and penetrated the brick of the dungeon walls.

MARGERETE
Too late. TOO LATE!

Margerete storms out of the room, her footsteps echoing.

EDWARD
Mother!

OPHELIE
Let her be, Edward. Her mind must not be well with the grave news. But first things first.
With thy father dead, there is only one natural course.

Ophelie brings out the ducal sword, still dripping wet. She offers it to Edward. He HESITATES.

Ophelie rests it on the ground. Edward stares at it.

OPHELIE
Now, my lord, the title passes unto thee.
Thou art Duke Edward Faltermeyer.

Edward gulps.

OPHELIE
I must inform Fredmond and the others.

Ophelie leaves.

EDWARD
Though but a boy of seven years,
Fate calls forth to don a man's guise.
Not a common one who holds his fate in his hands,
but a Duke, one bound to his people and his destiny.
Must a child be forced to bear this fate?
Shall I ne’er know the dreams my heart would seek,
If e’er I knew them? What solace lies there?
Must I be Duke eternal, stripped of choice,
Condemned to weigh what worth a mortal life?
Must I? Must I?

The ducal sword lays on the floor.

ACT III

SCENE I. THE HALL

Edward sits on the grand throne, though it seems too large for his small frame. Before him stands a group of ragged villagers, their eyes hollow with hunger and despair. One steps forth, speaking with trembling voice.

VILLAGER 1
My liege, beneath the shadow of thy castle's walls,
Our village floods, two fortnights gone and more.
The crops are drowned, now sunken or adrift,
And food is none, nor hope to soothe despair.
Even as we speak, our homes crumble 'neath the weight of water's wrath.

EDWARD
'Tis the reason for thy congregation?

VILLAGER 1
Aye, my lord. For mine own kin I speak,
Yet know this woe is shared by all who dwell
In Faltermeyer's drenched lands. We come
To beg thee shelter, noble Duke.

Edward turns, troubled, to Margerete. They speak in whispers.

MARGERETE
The people cast their pleading eyes on thee.
Their fates, my son, lie cradled in thy hands.

EDWARD
I cannot bear this, mother—I am not ready.

MARGERETE
Then blame thy father, who hath left thee thus,
Though blame avails thee naught. He is but dust,
And this, my child, the lot we now endure.

EDWARD
But Uncle Hans—could he not yet return?
Might we not craft some course with his consent?

MARGERETE
Hans tarries far, and time is not thy friend.
No hope comes from distant kin. Thou must
Depend upon thyself, and seize the reins.

EDWARD
I am unfit, mother—I am but a boy!

MARGERETE
And I, a woman, cursed by nature's bounds,
Cannot bear this burden in thy stead. It falls
To thee, and thee alone. If thou wouldst heed
(MORE)

MARGERETE (cont'd)
Thy mother's wisdom, I should counsel thus:
Turn these wretches from thy gates. Keep close
The servants and thy kin within these walls.

EDWARD
Thy counsel is but death, then?

MARGERETE
Death is death is death.
A Duke doth guard his duchy, not each life
That draws its fleeting breath beneath his rule.

EDWARD
What worth a duchy barren of its folk?
What value hath a Duke without his subjects?

MARGERETE
The royal stores, the meager grain we keep,
Can scarce sustain the mouths that call thee lord.

EDWARD
We shall find a way.

MARGERETE
And when the stores run dry,
When starving mothers beg thee for a crumb
To still their wailing babes, what wilt thou give?
Hope fills no bellies; thou canst not feed on dreams.

EDWARD
Yet I cannot let them perish!

Edward rises from his throne, his small figure trembling with resolve. He faces the villagers.

EDWARD
If it be shelter and hope ye seek, then come.
The walls of Faltermeyer shall guard thee all.
Bring what ye can, and rest within these halls.

Turning to Fredmond, Edward speaks with newfound authority.

EDWARD
Fredmond, see to the counting of the stores.
Let rations be prepared for one and all,
Divided fair among us and the folk.

FREDMOND
My Duke, the count shall exceed a hundred souls.

EDWARD
Aye. Then let us hope the gods shall favor us,
And make what little we possess endure.

The villagers bow low, murmuring thanks as Edward sinks back onto his throne, a boy bearing the weight of a kingdom’s fate.

SCENE II. AUGUST'S CHAMBERS

Edward, Ophelie, and Margerete sit amidst the dim splendor of the chamber. Margerete’s face is a mask of incredulity.

MARGERETE
I cannot abide this folly!
The cunning of thy grand schemes eludes my grasp.
From what wellspring flows thy wisdom?
For it is foreign to me, strange and unseemly.

EDWARD
Thy displeasure, mother, I do not doubt,
Yet my course is set. The people want for space;
We do not. My father’s chambers shall suffice
For us, the three of us, to share in kind.

OPHELIE
To dwell in such a noble place—
A boon beyond my station, noble Duke.

EDWARD
I only wish, dear Ophelie, this gift
Came not beneath such dire and grievous clouds.

MARGERETE
A common maid deserves no such regard.
Thou art her Duke, above her, far removed.
No reason for thy pairing to grow close.

EDWARD
And yet, dost thou not recall, dear mother,
How loyal she hath been to father’s cause?
A servant true, and closest of his kin.

MARGERETE
’Tis so, though it pains me still to yield.

Ophelie bows her head low, speaking softly.

OPHELIE
You honor me, my lord, far more than I deserve.

EDWARD
Let us hope, fair Ophelie, in days ahead,
Our mouths find bread as our mouths now find flattery.

MARGERETE
Our days grow darker still, my foolish child,
Whilst thou persist on this course of woe.

EDWARD
Again, thy bitter counsel, mother mine?
What wisdom dost thou offer but despair?
I shall not yield my people to the void,
Not whilst we wait upon my uncle's aid.

MARGERETE
We wait in vain! This path leads but to ruin.
If thou wouldst heed, I'd have thee clear the way—
Not for the men, but for the babes and gentler sex.

EDWARD
What dost thou mean? Speak plainly, mother.

MARGERETE
The men, my son, must meet their fate as men,
And face the jaws of death with gallant hearts.
Let women and the children find their safety,
While men embrace the noble duty owed.

EDWARD
What madness dost thou speak? I cannot grasp,
Or mayhaps I refuse to understand.

OPHELIE
I think she means—

MARGERETE
Peace, woman! Speak not in my stead!

EDWARD
Mother!

MARGERETE
Still thy tongue! I'll bid thee speak when needed,
Be it to season stew or sing a song.
Now, go—thy presence vexes me.

Ophelie exits, her face turned away to hide the single tear that escapes her eye.

MARGERETE
Men are born for death, my son, and naught else.
In war they perish, and in peace they starve.
What use have we for men, whose appetites
Devour more than they create? Their sin
Is consumption, endless and insatiate.
What foe can they defeat, when famine reigns?
Their seed is spent; their purpose now fulfilled.
Fredmond hath tallied all, and we possess
Sufficient boys to carry forth our lines.

EDWARD
Thou jests!

MARGERETE
Do I? Thy father rests in death,
Thine uncle wanders far from his duty on a fanciful quest.
The mantle rests upon thy tender shoulders.
Ponder well my words, Duke.

Margerete turns to gaze out an open window, her face cold as stone. Edward stands, his breath heavy with turmoil, then departs in silence.

SCENE III. AUGUST'S CHAMBERS - LATER THAT NIGHT

The winds blow. Curtains move. The new Duke tosses and turns, unable to rest with his new burdens.

A dripping noise is heard. It grows louder, and louder.

Edward's eyes SNAP open.

He sits up and looks at a window.

Lightning FLASHES and he sees August's GHOST.

Edward turns away immediately.

EDWARD
No, 'tis impossible what mine eyes perceive!

AUGUST
Thou hath failed...

EDWARD
No! No!

AUGUST
Thou art no son of mine. A mouse would wear the crown
with more spine than thee.

The dripping is heard again.

Drip.

Drip..

Drip...

Edward checks behind him.

Nothing. The apparition has DISAPPEARED.

SCENE IV. THE FOOD STORES

Enter Edward. Fredmond stands, counting and overseeing the rationing of food.

FREDMOND
My Duke.

EDWARD
Yes?

FREDMOND
The food stores. I am not certain of our current course. The sustenance in these stores is simply insufficient. There must be an error in calculation...

EDWARD
How so?

FREDMOND
Weeks worth of rations missing. How could this be?

EDWARD
We cannot focus on what we don't have. What can we do?

FREDMOND
Perhaps the flesh of the dead will suffice.

EDWARD
That is thy suggestion? Cannibalism? What is thy desire? To spill the blood of my own folk?

FREDMOND
I do not presume to know how heavy the burden thy carries with thy title. I only wished to inform thee of this situation of most dire import.

Edward puts his face in his hands.

EDWARD
I do not know what to do, my dear Fredmond. Wisdom escapes me. The solution to this problem is unclear, and I am not wise enough.

Edward looks up at Fredmond. His eyes are red.

EDWARD
For a pair of nights, I have been haunted by a spectre. The poltergeist wears the face of my father. A ghostly apparition, dripping, bloated, and rotting. He calls me, Fredmond. He calls upon me and says that I am unfit. That I am unable to be a good Duke. That I am a fool.

Drips are heard.

EDWARD
Is this true, Fredmond. Am I just a fool, crushed by the weight of this terrible burden?

FREDMOND
They father loved thee. His heart was filled with love, something this ghost knows naught of. Listen to thy memories of your father, not ghosts.

Edward hyperventilates. He hears the dripping, but he can't bring himself to look at the source.

EDWARD
He's here... he's here, now!

Fredmond holds Edward in his large, bearish arms.

FREDMOND
It is okay, Edward. There is no ghost here. I will slay any such creature which dares to haunt thee. This, I promise.

The drips subside. Edward calms down.

EDWARD
I thank thee, dear Fredmond. Without thy counsel, I am lost. But this matter of food... There must be an answer.

Edward looks around the room.

EDWARD
Further division?

FREDMOND
'Tis possible. But we'd all be left to starve.

EDWARD
Better that all of us starve than for us to be well fed whilst the commonfolk drown in the floods. I will go amongst them and eat the same portions as they.

FREDMOND
Very well, my Duke.

Edward exits.

FREDMOND
The boy Duke is the noblest one I've seen yet in all my years. Yet one wonders if nobility and empathy make a Duke long lived, or if they be the ingredients for self-destruction. Perhaps in dire times, we must hold truest to our beliefs. Righteousness may win the long night.
Or so I pray.

SCENE V. THE HALL

Edward is one of the first on line to receive his rations for the day. Margerete looks on in disgust.

Enter Fredmond.

FREDMOND
Lost in thy thoughts? And what awful thoughts they seem to be.

MARGERETE
Indeed, Fredmond. I think only of what foolishness my son indulges in.

FREDMOND
The Duke.

MARGERETE
Aye. Fate hath another fool to replace the dead one.

FREDMOND
My lady.

MARGERETE
O hush, Fredmond. Thy knoweth August's lack of substance and character. If he was a river, death would be impossible in his depths.

The people whisper in approval, seeing the young Duke eating only his fair share.

FREDMOND
But hope is a powerful thing. Thou sees its effects plainly? Even though the commonfolk are hungry, their belief in their Duke holds them steadfast in their resolve.

MARGERETE
The monster that is hunger has not yet grown mature. These people know not what 'tis to be hungry.

FREDMOND
And such knowledge is privy to thee?

Drip.

Drip.

MARGERETE
Dost thou hearest that infernal noise?

FREDMOND
What noise dost thou speak of?

MARGERETE
This infernal dripping...

Margerete looks around, frustrated.

MARGERETE
Where is it coming fro--

Margerete looks up and sees-- the APPARITION.

Margerete shrieks and snaps her head away.

MARGERETE
No, no, no... 'tis impossible. The boundaries of Hell and Earth have broken. It couldn't be... but I mustn't look. I musn't gaze upon this wraith...

AUGUST
Thy courage fails thee, for thy cannot muster the will to gaze upon my fate. Never hath thy gaze fallen upon my bloated, desecrated corpse. Thy fickle humors have thus changed since the night of murderous intent. Would thee hath strengthened thy resolve to steal my life, fallen to thy base desires, if I was in my bed that night?

Margerete sweats.

FREDMOND
My lady? What is wrong?

Margerete flees.

FREDMOND
The very same noises haunt the lady as did the boy... What could this mean?

SCENE VI. OPHELIE'S CHAMBER

Ophelie cleans the leftoever trinkets that August left in her quarters.

Drip.

Drip..

Drip..

The apparition appears.

Ophelie GASPS when she sees it.

OPHELIE
The Devil himself sends an emissary from Hell! O I have sinned, and I cannot face my own drawing shame.

Ophelie turns away from the ghost.

KNOCK.

Ophelie opens her eyes and looks around. The dripping has subsided.

OPHELIE
Who goes there?

EDWARD
'Tis Edward.

Ophelie gets up and calms herself down. She opens the door.

EDWARD
I heard a noise. Art thou alright?

OPHELIE
Yes. Yes. I have just...

Ophelie bites her lip.

OPHELIE
If I were to be honest, I have just seen a ghost.

EDWARD
My father?

OPHELIE
Yes. Thou hath seen this wraith? The very same?

EDWARD
I sleep not. The infernal dripping torments me night after night.

OPHELIE
Perhaps it is our great grief that drives our minds to create such phantoms.

EDWARD
I miss him.

OPHELIE
Not an uncommon feeling in this room, I fear.

Ophelie and Edward sit at her small table.

EDWARD
My father hath never been more joyful in his humors than when he was with thee. This knowledge I hope thee will take to heart.

OPHELIE
Was't known to thee?

EDWARD
'Tis obvious the joy was not by my mother's hand. She is learned and shrewd. An awesome creature. But not well matched with my father. No... during my studies, he would come into the library and take a book. Swiftly, I'd see the very same book in thy possession.

Edward pointed to books on Ophelie's bookshelf.

EDWARD
Then, some days later, he'd ask me if I read it.

OPHELIE
They father was ne'er one for books.

Edward smiles.

EDWARD
Nay. He was not. But we would talk about these books. We'd speak for some time. 'Twas the time I felt closest to mine own father. Through conversal o'er another's words. Speaking of books he did not read.

OPHELIE
His heart was filled with love for thee, do not be mistaken.

EDWARD
Not the first time such words have been said to me. Why haunt us, if thy words are true?

OPHELIE
This... I do not know.

EDWARD
This unholy ghost which haunts us doth mock me whilst the lands outside the castle drown. Mayhaps the Devil hath come for House Faltermeyer.

OPHELIE
Do not yield, my Duke.

EDWARD
Ah. "Duke". A great responsibility indeed. The head doth grow heavy.

OPHELIE
'Tis where the crown lay.

EDWARD
Thy knowledge doth betray thee. It seems we have spoken with each other, with my father as a medium. Then it must be known to thee that I do no bear the nature of a Duke.

OPHELIE
'Tis not strength, but the will to serve a good Duke doth make.

EDWARD
Aye. The duchy looks to me to fill their bellies and give them shelter. A duty unwanted, but a duty nonetheless. Even if their hopes are naught, I must compense with mine own. For 'tis a Duke's duty.

Edward looks at Ophelie.

EDWARD
My father harbored great fear for his position. He always spoke of escape. Yet... my uncle is gone, and my father's corpse lay here. In the very halls he wished to depart. He did not run. And nor will I.

OPHELIE
Maybe thou art more alike to thy father than expected.

ACT IV

SCENE I. THE ENTRANCE TO THE FOOD STORES

A cluster of soldiers stands firm before the doors to the food stores. Fredmond, parchment in hand, strives to address a throng of restless villagers, their faces gaunt with hunger and their tempers frayed. The crowd presses closer, murmurs rising into shouts. Edward, hearing the uproar, pushes his way through the mass.

FREDMOND
Good folk, good folk, I entreat thee—there is sustenance enough for all!

VILLAGER 2
The morsels thou givest us befit not even a wailing babe, let alone a man full-grown!

VILLAGER 3
And what of one heavy with child? I eat for two, yet thou wouldst bid me survive on naught but bread and milk?

The crowd clamors, their discontent swelling like a tempest.

Edward ascends a nearby crate, his father’s sword drawn, its steel gleaming—a relic of his ducal lineage.

EDWARD
My people, I beseech thee, hear me!

The mob stills, their eyes turning toward him.

VILLAGER 4
Lo, the boy-Duke speaks.

EDWARD
I know thy pain; I feel thy suffering. I know the sting of hunger and the shadow of despair that looms o'er us. Yet even now, as we stand amidst our trials, my uncle—Baron Hans—draws near with aid and provision.

VILLAGER 2
And pray, young lord, when shall thine uncle grace us with his presence?

EDWARD
His arrival is at hand! With him comes the promise of plenty, the hope of renewal for this duchy. But till then, I charge thee—be steadfast. Take only what thou art allotted, for to overreach is to court ruin. We have accounted for every soul's portion. If we falter, we seal our doom.

The crowd murmurs. Acceptance?

VILLAGER 5
Lies! The whelp hoards the stores for himself and his kin. I have seen it with mine own eyes!

The villagers erupt in fury. A surge pushes forward, toppling Edward from his perch. He crashes to the ground, trampled beneath the mob's desperate feet.

EDWARD
Nay, stop! I implore thee—!

His cries are swallowed by the chaos. The villagers overpower the guards and burst into the food stores. What follows is a scene of ravenous greed: men, women, and children seize loaves, grains, and meats, devouring them with wild abandon.

The excess soon takes its toll.

Stomachs unaccustomed to such glut rebel, and the villagers retch upon the very ground they fought to feed from. Others scrabble for crumbs, even those sullied by filth.

Amid the squalor, Edward lies bruised and battered, watching as desperation turns to despair. The air reeks of waste and ruin, the promise of sustenance now a bitter irony.

The villagers continue their frenzied consumption, their hunger blinding them to reason. Fredmond, pressed against the wall, shouts vainly for order. The soldiers, battered and overrun, retreat to the edges of the room. Edward lies on the ground, groaning in pain, his father's sword lying just out of reach. He watches helplessly as the scene descends into chaos.

FREDMOND
Fools! Dost thou not see what thou doest? Thy consume thy salvation in one reckless feast!

Fredmond’s voice is swallowed by the cacophony. A woman, clutching a child, pulls at a sack of flour only for another villager to wrest it away from her.

WOMAN
Please! My babe starves—have mercy!

VILLAGER 6
Thy babe be no hungrier than I! Stand aside, wench!

They fight, spilling flour onto the ground. Nearby, fists fly over a wheel of cheese, villagers clawing at one another like beasts.

Edward, summoning all his remaining strength, crawls toward his fallen sword. His fingers tremble as they close around the hilt. He drags himself upright, blood trickling from his temple.

A dripping noise is heard only to Edward. The ghost appears.

Edward doesn't avert his eyes this time. He STARES into the eyes of his father's ghost as he struggles to stand up.

He is the DUKE.

EDWARD
(weakly)
Enough... please...

No one listens. Edward staggers forward, his voice barely audible over the madness. Then, with a booming voice--

EDWARD
I command thee—stop!

Edward raises the sword with shaking hands, the weight almost too much to bear. The crowd pays him stops to look at him, his arms trembling.

EDWARD
If thou dost not cease, thou doomest us all! Hold onto hope!

A small ray of light catches the blade. For a moment, Edward looks like a Duke.

The villagers pause for a moment, startled by his resolve.

Then a ethereal voice CUTS through the silence.

AMLIN
The boy is weak. He hoards the stores for his kindred while we suffer!

The crowd surges forward. Edward swings the sword, more to warn than to harm, but he is overpowered. A villager grabs him by the arm and wrenches the blade away. Others shove him backward, his weakened body crumpling to the ground.

FREDMOND
No! My lord—stop this! He is thy Duke!

Fredmond rushes to Edward’s side as the mob tramples him in their desperate bid for food. Edward gasps, blood pooling beneath him. His hand reaches weakly for Fredmond.

Edward's eyes glaze over as he takes his final breath. Fredmond lets out a cry of anguish, cradling the boy’s lifeless body in his arms.

FREDMOND
Thou hath slain your Duke! Fools! Have you no shame?

But the villagers do not heed him. They storm the food stores, tearing through sacks and barrels like wild animals. Bread is ripped apart, grains spill across the floor, and meat is devoured raw. The room descends into chaos, a grotesque display of desperation and greed.

Some gorge themselves to the point of sickness, vomiting what their bodies cannot handle. Others fight over scraps, fists and nails drawing blood. A child wails, clutching a piece of bread as an adult snatches it from their hands. The soldiers, overwhelmed, abandon their posts and flee.

Fredmond, still holding Edward’s body, looks on in despair as the people of the duchy consume not only the food but what remains of their humanity.

The once noble hall is filled with overturned barrels, discarded rations trampled into the dirt, and villagers collapsing in exhaustion and sickness. The air is thick with cries of pain and the stench of waste.

Fredmond lays Edward’s body gently on the ground and rises, his face grim.

FREDMOND
(to himself)
The Duke is gone, and with him, all hope.

He steps away, his figure silhouetted against the chaos.

The scene fades as the villagers, like a tide unchecked, continue to destroy the very sustenance they had fought so desperately to claim. We see Edward’s lifeless body, his father’s sword lying beside him, a symbol of leadership drowned in the wake of despair.

SCENE II. AUGUST'S CHAMBERS

Enter Margerete, standing before a lofty windowpane, her gaze fixed upon the wasted lands below. Floods have claimed the earth; naught remains of crops or sustenance. Ophelie lingers near, anxious and forlorn.

MARGERETE
'Tis done.

OPHELIE
Nay, my lady, it cannot be!

MARGERETE
’Tis the bitter truth. All is ended.
Margarete laughs, cold and hollow.

MARGERETE
Perchance ’tis better so, for one as aged and withered as I. A crone’s demise comes swift—and mine comes unchallenged.

OPHELIE
Thou art no crone!

MARGERETE
Silence thy lips, whore!
Ophelie gasps, recoiling.

MARGERETE
Aye, Ophelie, dost thou think me blind? I have known—aye, known—from the hour thy great love laid his eyes on my poor, ugly countenance. August bed me but only to sire an heir. Once Edward was born, my sheets were ne'er graced by his presence again. Duke August might as well been a eunuch, until thy presence was known to him.

OPHELIE
My lady, I—

MARGERETE
DUCHESS! Thou shalt address me by my rightful station, so long as thou art beneath me. And beneath me thou shalt remain. Do not mistake thyself, Ophelie. I know well of thy trespasses. My husband hath shared thy bed; thou hast tasted the false blossom of love, as once did I.

OPHELIE
Duchess, I beg thee—

MARGERETE
Ah, the title returns to thy quivering tongue. But where was this reverence when he whispered sweet nothings to thee? When he fled my chambers for thine? Love—what a fleeting, fickle thing it is. Like a bird that soars beyond reach, leaving us to wait, to hope it might return—yet oft it vanishes, ne’er to grace us again. A fool’s hope indeed.
Margerete bends, removing her shoes calmly.

MARGERETE
Love is hope—and hope is lost. For thee, for me, for my son—if he yet draws breath.

OPHELIE
Nay, my lady, we must cling to hope!

MARGERETE
Ha! The same hope I harbored when awaiting my husband's return but a fortnight past? The same hope that burned in my hand, clutching a blade sharpened for vengeance? The hope that betrayed me when another's hand felled him ere mine could? Hope—a jest for fools like my son and whores like thee!

OPHELIE
Without hope, what purpose hath life? Even now, we stand here, hoping—do we not? Hoping that thy son, noble Edward, might lead us from despair's grasp, from these waters that would drown us.

MARGERETE
Aye, our beloved Edward. Yet on this dark eve, I shall confess a bitter truth, a secret that has festered within my soul.

OPHELIE
Speak not in haste, my lady.

MARGERETE
Haste? Nay, I am more clear of mind than e'er before.

Margerete steps onto the windowsill, her figure silhouetted against the moonlit sky.

MARGERETE
Edward is no son of August. He is born of his brother, Hans. A single night with a single soldier, while I was but a girl. The night before the great campaign, where brave soldiers would storm a terrible fortress and surely perish, a single night. For this, I pay—a hypocrite, consumed by rage o'er adultery, while my own womb bore the fruit of betrayal. How could I have known that I would be promised to the brother of the one who hath bedded me? All this pain, for but a single night. How could I tell this noble dumb fool that the son I bore him was not his own, but of his kin? O, all over a single night, my life was ended. He must have known. He must have seen it, smelt it upon my skin. One's sins are apparent to those closest.
Yet what matters it now? The sins of his fathers have bequeathed him naught but ruin and woe.

OPHELIE
The sins of the father visit the son.

MARGERETE
Well-quoted, Ophelie. Thy mind is keen, I see.

OPHELIE
I have learned, in what moments of leisure I could steal betwixt my labors.

MARGERETE
Aye, ever diligent. I should not think thee one to tarry or dally in unseemly pursuits.

Margerete chuckles, her laughter sharp as steel.

OPHELIE
My lady, though thou spurn my words, I entreat thee—hope yet abides. Love yet endures.

MARGERETE
Love? A shallow bedfellow to despair. Thou didst share more than words with my husband—yet thou prattle of love? What folly.

OPHELIE
Aye, folly it may be. Yet hope sustains me, even as I walked these halls in shame, knowing my place. Each day I toiled, clinging to the hope of but an hour with my love—thy husband. A star to guide me through darkness, though I knew those moments would ne'er be a lifetime.

MARGERETE
A fool and a strumpet both!

OPHELIE
Perhaps. Yet better a fool who hopes than one who sinks into despair, tearing down others' dreams in bitterness.

MARGERETE
Thou darest—!

Margerete raises a hand but falters. Her voice softens to a murmur.

A dripping is heard only to Margerete. Behind Ophelie, the apparition. Margarete SNAPS her head away. She can't look at the Ghost.

MARGARETE
What use is it? We are doomed, all of us. The fields lie drowned, our sustenance gone. No hope, no salvation. I cannot bring myself to look thee in the eyes. Thy victory is at hand, cruel Devil. I will join thee in thy nine circles.
'Tis finished. And now… so am I.

With a final, resolute step, Margerete vanishes into the night beyond the window.

ACT V

SCENE I. THE THRONE ROOM - LATER

Dead bodies lay strewn about the floor, covered in equal parts vomit and food. Bloody corpses that show the human cost of starvation and the bruises of trampling.

The castle is lit with something foreign to us, something we have not seen in what seems like an eternity. Sunlight.

Fredmond sits in the corner, holding his head in shame. Near him, Edward's corpse.

The doors open, with Hans entering.

HANS
I return with grain and the floods have ceased... Dear heavens, what greets mine eyes in mine own hall?

Hans looks around. He spots Fredmond.

HANS
Fredmond, what has happened here?

FREDMOND
Starvation, my Baron. Desperation. But thy nephew...

HANS
Of Edward thy speak? What has happened to my dear nephew?

Fredmond points to the corpse. Hans runs over and cradles the dead body in his arms. He does not cry, but opens his mouth in an empty, silent, roar.

HANS
Who did this to my nephew, Fredmond? What wretch is responsible?

Hans looks around.

HANS
Where is my brother? Where is the Duke?

FREDMOND
The Duke in held in thy hands, Baron Hans.

HANS
No... She was right. My brother, dead, then? And now his son, my--

Hans cries for a while.

He stands and walks to a spot three feet over. He moves some corpses roughly, and picks up the ducal sword. He stares at the throne.

SCENE II. THE THRONE ROOM - ANOTHER TIME

Duke Hans sits upon the throne. He now wears the ducal sword. To the left of him, Fredmond. The halls are more empty than we've seen before, likely due to the starvation and floods, but it seems that the tide has shifted.

A feast takes place.

HANS
A ducal lineage, snuffed in a day.

Hans looks over at some of the peasants. They heartily eat some goat.

FREDMOND
I still cannot believe the expediency with which our sustenance and salvation were delivered. In but a fortnight, thou return with livestock and grain enough for whole farms? And at the same time, the floods stop?

Hans' face doesn't shift. He does not own these achievements as his own.

FREDMOND
Thy blessings are divine, then, and shared with the rest of the duchy. We should be so honored to be blessed with a ruler so generous as thee.

Ophelie arrives to serve some food.

OPHELIE
Yes. Quite lucky, we are. An honest and just ruler.

Hans looks at Ophelie.

HANS
Would Edward have been happy to witness such a sight? Our people, feasting again?

OPHELIE
Edward had hope until the end, my Duke. His spirit never waivered. An impossible task lay in front of him, and he took it in stride. Edward gave everything he had, everything he could possibly give.

FREDMOND
Let us hope his spirit rests in peace.

HANS
Yes. Let us hope they all rest in peace. Margerete and Edward.

Hans raises his glass in a toast. The hall goes silent.

HANS
A toast! To the bravest and best Duke who ever lived.

VILLAGER 8
AYE! To the boy Duke! Duke Edward!

FREDMOND
And what of Duke August?

Hans looks out to the crowd.

HANS
Which of us hath ne'er bore a fool for kin?

The peasants laugh.

HANS
My brother had many an admirable quality, but never he was a man of much forethought. How could he have known of the calamities he would cause? How could he know how to save all of ye from those unholy waters?

Ophelie stares at him. Her anger barely hidden.

HANS
Had my brother been a more thoughtful Duke, had he more food stores, even ones farther away from this castle... tragedy could have been avoided. No. This Duchy doth require a steady and learned hand, not one of a fool any longer. Nor a naive boy...

Hans looks away. Looks like he's crying.

HANS
To a new beginning. A new House Faltermeyer, and a new era for our wondrous Duchy. Even now, thine enrollment in our new ducal soldiers is paramount to our success. With thee by my side, serving as mine own eyes and ears amongst the duchy, we will never be so threatened ever again. Never again will we starve!

The villagers cheer.

SCENE III. MAID'S CHAMBERS - LATER

Ophelie sits, slowly undressing and getting ready for bed. She looks tired, exhausted from the series of events which had transpired.

Her door creaks open.

Ophelie jumps and covers herself.

It's Hans.

HANS
Sorry, I didn't mean to--

Hans slightly closes the door and backs out.

Ophelie resumes changing.

HANS
I am sorry.

OPHELIE
Just a moment, my lord.

Ophelie finishes changing. She exhales.

OPHELIE
Yes, my lord?

Hans opens the door. Ophelie is standing.

HANS
Please sit, Ophelie.

Hans takes a seat in Ophelie's chair. Ophelie continues to stand.

HANS
A miracle. That is what the villagers are saying about me and my nephew. I cannot believe the wondrous life that I lead. Yet for so much gained, much is lost as well. A life for a life most wondrous.

Hans holds his hands together. He looks at Ophelie.

HANS
Why dost thou hold thy tongue?

OPHELIE
I do not, my lord.

HANS
Then speak, chambermaid. And speak freely.

OPHELIE
Very well. A miracle is a thing that happens without cost. This is no miracle.

Ophelie sits on her bed, slightly elevated compared to the chair.

OPHELIE
He spoke of thee with the highest remarks, thy brother. The Duke. My great love.

HANS
Did he?

OPHELIE
Yes. Whilst we were thinking and planning of the ways that we would frolick after our eventual retreat from this place... he spoke of his brother, the great Baron. He spoke of how intelligent his brother was, and how much his brother wanted for him. He told a tale of two brothers, an elder brother who gave the younger the world.

HANS
Yes. We were young fools back then. We were nine generations away from any meaningful power. We had names, but we were no better than peasants.

OPHELIE
That's not how thy brother spoke of it. He spoke of that time as a time of peace. Before the war, a time of peace and of joy-- togetherness. Thy brother had hopes of returning to that place. He had hoped that our love would prove strong enough to leave.

HANS
A good man does not leave his commitments. Certainly not a good Duke.

OPHELIE
All these royal titles, all this power. Thy brother hated it all. He hated the power that he held in his hands, the power shown in the sword thy carry so brazenly. His body broke under the strain of such responsibility and burden. Thou hath spoken of thy brother so charitably and respectfully, thy knowledge of thy brother is obvious. Thou art aware of his great love, and his pain.

HANS
Why speak of this to me now? To what end? I cannot change the past. What would thou have me do?

OPHELIE
Why allow thy brother to retain the title of Duke? One thy deemed so unworthy?

HANS
A greater imbecile decided this course. One far more powerful than I. He saw the head my brother carried, and decided it should be him. I had no way of intervening. No way to save thy love from his own stupidity.

Hans looks at Ophelie.

HANS
However stupid, August did smartly accept a bride. An unwed Duke provokes punishment from the gods. 'Tis why I offer thee a place by my side, to be a Duchess.

Hans stands.

HANS
Rumors of thine intelligence hath spread. A well read and reasoned Duchess would be an obvious choice. The other Houses see no value in our duchy. They see but flooded fields and lost souls. But with thee by my side, we can bring our Duchy to greatness.

Ophelie does not get up.

HANS
On thy knees would be a suitable response to this offer.

OPHELIE
By thy side. To enjoy the splendors of nobility. The enjoy the very shackles August wished to free himself of?

HANS
Thou think thyself better than nobility? The fool hath poisoned thy mind beyond repair.

OPHELIE
The Duke was no fool. He had a great many gifts.Hope, most of all. His greatest gift. The one that he imparted onto his "son", as he thought.

HANS
"Son"? Why dost thou speak so strangely?

Ophelie laughs, almost resembling Margerete. She looks at Hans, deep into his soul. She makes a decision on whether or not Hans deserves to know.

OPHELIE
The boy Duke was thy boy, "Uncle" Hans. An honorable and most worthy boy, born out of wedlock.

Hans stands and backs away, slipping towards the farthest wall.

HANS
No. My own son? My own blood? How...

OPHELIE
A woman ravished by thee on the night before thy campaign. A night 'fore the beheading of thine enemy.

HANS
My son. Edward, my son! A curse haunts me, for the cruel spell I have cast. The Witch Viola was right in her prophecy. Not only a kinsman, but a firstborn. I thought it to be some bastard in the fields, but Edward...

Ophelie stands.

OPHELIE
Whatever thy sins be, thy will hath been done. Thou must live with thine actions. Consequences.

Hans's grief quickly turns to RAGE.

HANS
And what of thee, whore? Thy lover is dead, and I have no need for a chambermaid nor a Duchess as poisonous as thee.

OPHELIE
Nor do I need a husband false as a snake. Consorting with a witch... What hath thee done?

HANS
Struggle hath not touched thee, poor chambermaid. I will not be judged by thee! A spell was cast, one that would raise my position.

OPHELIE
Baron was not enough? Thy brother's love, not enough?

HANS
Great Duke August was running the Duchy straight into the depths of Hell. Loans upon loans to keep our citizens afloat without proper taxation, falling into debt, the Duchy was in an impossible position.

OPHELIE
So in thy wisdom, thy witch poured rains upon the Duchy.

HANS
Merely a device. A device to bring me to the forefront, to give me a say, to redirect my brother's foolish actions.

OPHELIE
My love's blood is on thy hands. Thy son, as well. A death upon thy house, twofold. So many commonfolk drowned in the fields or starved within these walls. That is the cost of thine actions.

Ophelie stands and storms towards the door.

HANS
Do not leave me, Ophelie. Thou art not dismissed.

OPHELIE
Thy commands are but wind, Hans. My Duke is dead.

Ophelie opens the door.

OPHELIE
I miss him every day that passes. He once said we would depart this place. Maybe that's where I shall be.
This duchy hath no place for me. Nor would I want it. To serve under such a Duke, nay, to serve under such a man.
I make my choice.

Exit Ophelie.

SCENE IV. THE BEACH

Ophelie stands on the shores of the beach, the one that August spoke of taking her to.

The water washes upon her toes, submerging everything beneath her ankles.

She smiles.

OPHELIE
What a place this is...

Ophelie looks into the horizon. She turns around. August's ghost appears, still wretched and bloated.

OPHELIE
Thy words were not false, my love.
This beach is beautiful.

Ophelie stares lovingly at August's ghost, transformed -- not bloated or broken, but the spitting image of the last time she saw him.

She stands still, the water risen to her knees.

She smiles.

FADE TO BLACK.